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CAUSES OF CHINESE EMIGRATION

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Chinese emigration is a movement of the most singular character. It is one which differs in purpose from emigration from European countries. Europeans come to America because of a surplus of population which depresses wages and drives the ambitious to better their economic conditions or to secure a greater degree of personal freedom. Apparently the same conditions lie back of Chinese emigration. In China the land is truly thickly peopled and the economic condition wretched. Still we cannot safely say that the Chinese emigrate entirely for these two purposes. Europeans may leave their abodes for political freedom or for religious tolerance. The Chinese do not. The Chinese government is indeed despotic at the top, but it is democratic at the bottom. Religious persecutions, such as Catholics against Protestants and churchmen against dissenters which have been so prevalent in Europe, are entirely unknown in China. There are other factors which make Chinese emigration peculiar. Europeans come from all parts of the country; the Chinese come from certain parts only. Europeans go everywhere; the Chinese go somewhere only. Europeans come to teach, to trade, to work and to till the soil; the Chinese primarily come to labor, although trading is a later result. With Europeans, no matter male or female, old or young, they all come; with the Chinese only the young men emigrate. Europeans intend to settle permanently; the Chinese intend to go back. Europeans become citizens and are assimilated into American citizenship; the Chinese do not care for naturalization, nor for the native customs, manners and dress. Europeans go to places where they can find the greatest fortune; the Chinese crowd to countries where they can find the greatest number of friends and relatives. Europeans emigrate to countries where they are most favored; the Chinese persist in landing where they are opposed by legislation and public opinion. With Europeans only the most favored class come; with the Chinese only the least favored classes come.

Chinese emigration has peculiar territorial limits not only in

its destination but in its source. It is chiefly composed of young peasants coming from only six prefectures of the two southeastern provinces, Fookien and Kwantung, lying between Foochow and Canton. These adventurous emigrants have for centuries penetrated through the Indian archipelago, have pushed through the Indian Ocean to Ceylon and Arabia, have reclaimed Formosa and Hainan, have established a remarkable trade with Cochin China, Cambodia and Siam and have introduced useful arts into Java, the Philippines and the Malay Peninsula. To-day they venture southward to Australia and far westward to Peru, Mexico, Canada, Cuba, and America in spite of the stringent laws those uncourteous countries have adopted to exclude them.

When we think of the peculiarities surrounding this emigration, we cannot help believing that there are certain local characteristics which make Kwantung and Fookien differ from the other provinces of the empire. The inborn independent idea, the seafaring spirit, the early contact with western nations, the stress of war, the "Golden Romance," the traveling facilities, the social prejudice at home and the attachment to kindred—all these are factors that are laboring to make the Cantonese and Fookienese a migratory people.

Still while we are pointing out the reasons why the other provincials would not emigrate and why only the Cantonese and Fookienese emigrate, we cannot deny that the density of population in these provinces has an important influence. It is a world-known fact that China is overpopulated. Comparing the area and population of the Chinese empire and America, we find that in territory China is just about as large as the United States. But her population is five times as great. In China every square mile supports a hundred people, but in America twenty only, one-fifth as many. The mild climate of Southern China also encourages the increase of population. So Canton, one of the treaty ports, has an enormous population which, by the census of 1899, was 2,500,000,—compared with that of the northern cities, we find that this is more than thrice that of Hankow (709,000) or four times that of Shanghai (615,000), the great commercial center at the mouth of the Yangtse River. Much has been written by travelers about people living in boats on the Pearl River and about growing potatoes in the kitchens. Both these facts, though more or less exaggerated, show that the southeastern provinces are densely inhabited.

Aside from rapid multiplication, another influence impelling the people to emigrate is the peculiar family tradition which entitles the eldest son of the family to occupy the ancestral house. Suppose a man has five sons, which is not uncommon in Canton; his eldest son will have the house. The other four sons have each to build themselves a house. Again supposing these five sons each has a family of five children, how can these children, the land in Canton being so dear and labor so cheap, manage to house themselves? Generally they cannot, and emigration is the result.

If China is overpopulated, why do not the people of other provinces emigrate? Because China is not a migratory nation. The Chinese are home loving; the Middle Kingdom is to them the center of civilization and all the surrounding countries are savage nations, nations where there is little to gain but much to lose. Until the present time the outside world has been a chaos of mystery, unknown and forbidding to the Chinese. Not only would the respectable people not voluntarily go outside the limits of the Celestial Empire, but even the desperate convicts and exiles dreaded banishment to these distant lands. It is in democratic Canton that every man is considered the equal of every other man and all countries worthy of consideration. Even there the well-to-do do not emigrate. Students and merchants who can afford to stay, consequently stay. Conventional ideas, of course, keep the women at home. It is the wretched economic condition that has driven the young peasants out.

What is this economic condition then? The emigrants are almost exclusively peasants. At home they till their own soil and support their own families. Their income is little, but their families are enormous. When the harvest is good, they get barely sufficient to satisfy their hunger. In time of droughts which often occur in winter in the southeastern provinces, they suffer from the failure of crops. We have also to remember that it is the well-to-do peasants that have their own land to till. Those that have no land, labor for those that have. The misery of these laboring peasants in times when food is scarce we need not picture. When they are out of work, they seek to cut wood in the hills. By this new occupation they can obtain only enough to meet the demand of their home and an extra meal, the reward of the whole day's labor being twenty or thirty cents. But hills are soon deforested and their

families are constantly threatened with starvation. Naturally these able-bodied, young peasants aspire for something greater, something by which they can better their own economic conditions and secure the ease and comfort of life. At home such excellent opportunities are lacking. They have to seek them abroad.

But the economic condition like overpopulation, though having a good deal to do with emigration, cannot be said to be the sole cause. This is shown by the fact that in the north the provinces along the Yellow River are often not less disturbed by floods than are Kwangtung and Fookien by droughts. The great plague that ravaged the North last spring is one of the calamities that often befall those provinces and drive many to starvation and untimely graves. Yet the Northerners do not come out, not entirely because they are less ambitious, but because China is primarily not a migratory country. The emigration of the Cantonese and Fookienese can be accounted for only by the peculiar local characteristics of those two provinces.

A marked characteristic of the people of Kwangtung and Fookien is their independent, adventurous and unbending spirit. The independent spirit of the Cantonese for instance, has long been fostered by the independence of their province which despised submission to the Son of Heaven and which did not join the Celestial Empire till the Ming Dynasty about three hundred years ago. This unruly spirit their northern neighbors designate as "savageness," and they call the Cantonese tauntingly "the southern savages." Whether savage or not, Kwangtung preferred independence to servile submission to the despotic rule of the central government and homage which their northern neighbors take pride in as a sign of civilization. The tribute, however, they did not fail to send to the throne even during the turbulent time of anarchism at the latter part of the Tong Dynasty (907 to 959 A. D.), when the other provinces revolted against the government. So Kwangtung always preserves its individuality. What the northern provinces did, it would not do; what the northern provinces would not do, it did. This deep-rooted independent spirit no emperor could extirpate. Even the powerful Chen Chi Wong, who had in 249 B. C., brought the Six Feudal Kingdoms to subjugation, did not know what to do with Kwangtung. The expedition he sent there met with firm resistance. Half was starved and half slain. The emperors of the Sung

Dynasty (960 to 1279 A. D.), instead of requiring the servile homage from the Cantonese, sought to curry their favor. They built a wall for them against the depredations of Cochin China. This independent spirit is what the Northerners lack, is what the Northerners envy. It is, therefore, no wonder that, while their northern countrymen were bound by the idea of absolute seclusion, the people of Kwangtung and Fookien, on the other hand, traversed the South China Sea and crossed the Pacific Ocean to Hawaii and America.

Their adventurous spirit has been fostered by their distant commercial enterprises. Their early commercial history showed considerable trade with the Romans. During the period of luxury Rome stood in want of silk, and silk came only from China. We can trace this as far back as the time of Virgil and Pliny. Virgil spoke of the soft wool obtained from the trees of the Seres or Chinese. Pliny, on the other hand, condemned the useless voyages made merely for that luxurious stuff. Smarkand and Bokhara were in these days the emporiums between the West and the East. Caravans traveled through the desert of Gobi till they reached the north-western province of Shensi. This route would have led the north-western provincials to trade with the Westerners, if it was not cut short by the Tartar robbers who constantly pillaged the loaded caravans. A more expeditious way was pursued, which was destined to confine the commerce entirely to Canton. The merchants took their ships from that port to Ceylon, where they sold their goods to the Persian merchants who crowded thither.

During the Mohammedan ascendancy the Arabs penetrated the dreary deserts into China and established considerable trade in Canton, at that time known as Kanfu, literally the Cantonese Prefecture. From the "Voyages of the Two Arabian Travelers," we learn that Chinese junks loaded in Siraf for Maskat, thence for India and Kau-cammali. Having watered at Kau-cammali, they entered the Sea of Harkand and touched at Lajabalus whence they sailed for Kalaba. Thence they steered for Betuma and Senef. Having gotten through the gates of China, they waited for the flood tide to go to the fresh water gulf where they dropped their final anchor at Canton. This trade like the Roman trade was entirely confined to the southern port of Canton. So was the trade with the Indies.

The Indian archipelago has always offered a field to the Chinese trade. Even in the Han Dynasty (202 B. C. to 220 A. D.), many

Chinese junks laden with emigrants sailed southward in quest of fortune. They went as far as Arabia, traded with Ceylon and Malacca and penetrated Borneo. As they had touched Archeen, they might have ventured to West Africa, if their junks had been adapted to such voyages.

The Manchu inroads also forced many a Cantonese to leave his abode for the Straits Settlements. The Fookienese likewise preferred shipwreck and death to an ignominious subjection to the Manchus. Able-bodied, young men from the eastern parts of Canton (Chaouchofoo) and the southern districts of Fookien, Tunggau, Tseuechoo and Changchoo sailed in large numbers for the islands of the Indian archipelago.

This adventurous spirit was rendered unbending by the many struggles and difficulties they encountered, when they came into contact with the Western explorers. These haughty explorers, after their success in maritime discoveries in the sixteenth century, had rude ideas about the civilization of the colossal empire. Because China was peaceful, they thought they had found an easy prey—all their early acts being marked by bloodshed and violence. In 1520 the marauding Portuguese violated the family sanctuary of the Ningpo people. In 1543 the Spaniards occupied the Philippines and massacred the Cantonese traders. In 1622 the Dutch seized the Pescadores and erected fortifications there; this led to an incessant war of twenty-eight years with the Cantonese in Formosa. In 1635 the British fleet attacked the Bogue Fort of Canton. All these events led the Manchu government to stringent measures, resulting in the closing of all ports against the Westerners, confining the trade to Canton only. This gave the Cantonese the opportunity of dealing with these aggressive Westerners who were to them less mysterious than to their northern neighbors. Gradually it came to their knowledge that there was still land beyond the Four Seas and that there were countries rich in opportunities and fortune besides the Indies; when the great demand for labor in America arose, they flocked over the Pacific into the promised land.

Other occurrences were destined to make the emigration inevitable. First, the stress of war. At the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644 A. D.), China was thrown into a chaos. The whole empire was at the mercy of dynastic aspirants and marauding soldiers. Other disasters naturally resulted from the war. The

Manchus came in. Their ruthless spirit was such as, to quote the phrase of a celebrated Chinese historian, "to make a patriot's hair stand on the end." Thousands and thousands were put to the sword. Cities were sacked and looted. The Manchurian invaders spread terror everywhere they went. The most unfortunate province was Kwangtung, where the survivors of the Ming Dynasty took refuge. Every means was employed to extirpate the royal family, so every means was employed to destroy the place of refuge. A traveler who visits Southern China can still see the great wastes which were formerly sites of flourishing towns and villages. Not only this, adventurous Canton could not enjoy a quiet day. The aggressive Westerners, who were disgusted with the haughty manner of the Manchu officials, not infrequently sent their cannon balls against the Bogue Fort and marched upon Canton. Twice did Canton enormously suffer from the Opium Wars. The British soldiers marched to the Viceroy's Yamen, causing consternation among the people. The Taiping Rebellion, which had its origin in Kwangsi, did not spare the cities of its neighboring province, the houses of which were as much robbed and destroyed as those of the northern provinces.

At the time of these disasters, there were also certain attractions to quicken the emigrating movement. The sugar plantation in Cuba, the demand of labor in Mexico, Canada, and Peru for other economic purposes, and especially the discovery of gold in California had stirred the whole world with hopes of unexpected fortune. The call of the Gold Mountains, the name given by the Chinese laborers to the Californian ranges, was ringing in the air of the distressed regions of Canton. To go over there and dig the gold up was the thirsty desire of the poor sufferers. "To be starved and to be buried in the sea are the same," said some young adventurers. "Why not plunge right into death rather than wait for death!" With this spirit they even embarked in their crude, old junks and combatted with the dangerous element of the sea without any fear or the least idea of receding. They sailed in these days directly for California before reaching Hawaii. Those who had made their fortune returned and spread the news of the "Golden Romance." The public spirit was stirred. Thousands and thousands forsook their homes.

We must also not forget the traveling facilities which the foreign

agents in Hongkong and Macao afforded to the Chinese laborers. Placards were posted on every street wall, narrating the charming news of getting fortune quick and the attractive facilities of going to these wonderful lands. Every able-bodied man, no matter whether he could afford the passage money or not, was induced to emigrate, if he could borrow the money to go. Those who could not pay for the passage readily received the most cordial assistance from the agents. A certain amount of money was advanced to the family. A certain amount was paid for clothing and other traveling equipments. What the employers needed was labor, labor of any sort. Nothing would interfere with the Chinese custom, dress and manners. Emigrants need not necessarily know the foreign languages. They need only to work and get good pay. So farmers laid down their spades, carpenters put aside their chisels, and woodcutters said good-bye to their old companions, the axe and the pipe.

Among the classes of peasantry who emigrate, there are in some parts of Canton another class, the class of semi-slaves, who run errands for the villagers and receive pay for their services. In form they are entirely independent. But, nevertheless, they cannot enjoy certain social privileges which the common people can. In spite of the social prejudice, this class has grown to be very intelligent and prominent. This also aroused the prejudices of the ignorant against them the more. Naturally in accord with the independent spirit of the Cantonese, they prefer to die abroad where they can enjoy freedom than to endure the social prejudice at home. Liberty, above all, is the star that guides these people to America.

Having taken a comprehensive view of the causes of emigration—the stress of war, the gold attraction, the traveling facilities and social prejudice at home,—which render an unmigratory nation migratory, it is easy to see why the Chinese laborers come to America. But aside from all these there is still another cause that accounts for the non-emigration to Europe. That is the Chinese sense of family attachment. To make clear what I mean, I may say that the Chinese stick to their friends and relatives. Where their friends and relatives go, there they go. Where their friends and relatives do not go, there they do not go. Formerly they flocked to the Straits Settlements only, and not a single one came to America, nay, not even by the gold attraction or any means of inducement. But as soon as a beginning was made, the adventurous

emigrant was soon followed by his friends and relatives. That is why, notwithstanding, only three Chinese emigrants appeared in San Francisco in 1830, by 1857, only forty-five years later, we find quite a large settlement in that city. From three, the immigration had changed to eighteen thousand, twenty-one, an increase wonderfully rapid when compared with that long period between American independence and 1830, when not a single Chinese stepped on American soil. Since the passage of the exclusion laws, of course the number of Chinese entering the United States has been curtailed, but the inducement to come has not stopped. In fact as the unfavorable conditions in China have not changed, the attractiveness of America to the Chinese emigrant still increases. High wages, higher by far than were obtainable in the old mining camp days continue to beckon him eastward. When such attractions are present, it is hardly to be expected that the Chinese laborers will look with respect upon an exclusion law which contradicts with their interests and seems to them an affront to their race. So I dare to predict, no matter how stringent the exclusion law is, it cannot keep these zealous men off, and I should add that it is useless to keep them off. I may also say that no matter how much less promising the economic opportunity of Europe may be, if these laborers have once set foot on that continent and become accustomed to living there as they have in America, there is sure to be a constant emigration thence as remarkable as is the present neglect of that field by the Chinese emigrants.